

English Language Arts 12 Midterm Examination

Directions: The essay prompts below refer to the texts we have read so far in English Language Arts 12. **Choose two** of the prompts and respond to each with a fully developed short essay (ie. intro, body and conclusion) on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure your response **completely** answers all parts of the prompt, makes **specific** references to the text (please cite page or line numbers), and is free of major spelling and grammatical errors. You may use your Holt *Elements of Literature* book and your notes to aid in constructing your responses. Each of your two responses is worth 50 points.

The question below refers to the selections “from Beowulf, Part One,” “from Grendel,” “Life in 999: A Grim Struggle,” and “from Beowulf, Part Two.”

1. All **epic heroes** overcome powerful forces that arise from their particular ways of life. Modern heroes may conquer the unknowns of outer space or bring food or medicine to hungry people. The Anglo-Saxon hero slew monsters. Of course, monsters exist only in fantasy. But a monster may be an **archetypal symbol** for some broader problem or challenge a society faces. What challenges of Anglo-Saxon life are represented by the monsters Beowulf faces? Use your knowledge of Anglo-Saxon society and of *Beowulf*. On a separate sheet of paper, explain your answer. To support your point, use specific references, including at least one example of imagery, from the poem.

The question below refers to the selection “from Gilgamesh: A Verse Narrative.”

2. Evaluate Gilgamesh and Enkidu as **epic hero** and **foil**. What are their character traits? In your opinion what traits of the two characters are most effectively presented in the **epic**? How might the characters need to be changed if they were presented in a modern **epic**? On a separate sheet of paper, explain your answer.

The question below refers to the selection “the Iliad, from Book 22, The Death of Hector.”

3. Based on this selection, what qualities did Homer find heroic? On a separate sheet of paper, explain your answer. Cite specific passages in the text where the qualities are shown. As evidence, include at least one **epic simile** or other figure of speech.

The question below refers to the selection “The Prologue from The Canterbury Tales.”

4. Choose your favorite character from “The Prologue,” and describe the character’s traits in your own words. Then, analyze how Chaucer’s description—his choice of words and details—brings out the traits you described. Finally, discuss how your chosen character represents English life in the Middle Ages. You may refer to your knowledge of the Middle Ages from the Literary Period Introduction as well as from this selection. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

The question below refers to the selection “from The Pardoner’s Tales.”

5. What is the most valid moral that you find in “The Pardoner’s Tale”—in other words, what message or idea in it still applies *best* to life today? On a separate sheet of paper, discuss how this message is delivered in the tale. Analyze any way in which the message is **ironic**, such as a discrepancy between the tale and the teller; between what is expected and what happens; or between what is said and what is meant.

The question below refers to the selection “from The Wife of Bath’s Tale.”

6. Based on “The Wife of Bath’s Tale,” what is Chaucer’s view of life? Compare and contrast Chaucer’s view with the Wife of Bath’s view of life. Give evidence from the text for the presence of each view of life. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

The question below refers to the selection “from The Day of Destiny from Le Morte d’Arthur.”

7. Imagine that you are one of the first citizens of England to read *Le Morte d’Arthur* when it is first published in 1485. How accurate do you find the book as a portrait of life in your time? To answer this question, use your knowledge of the Middle Ages as well as your reading of this selection. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.